



When it rains it kills. Slow down.

Last year 2,918 people were killed or seriously injured when driving in the rain.

The dangers of driving in the rain



Highways England has launched a new national road safety campaign urging drivers to slow down when it's raining after 2,918 people were killed or seriously injured on roads during rain and wet weather conditions in Great Britain last year. Richard Leonard is Highways England's head of road safety and explains the thinking behind the new campaign

“Rain-activated paint will also become visible to people leaving motorway services when it is raining, urging them to slow down”

Richard Leonard

Why did you decide to focus on rain?

Most of us already slow down in snow, ice or fog but when it rains we consider it normal so we don't adapt our driving. The sad fact is that people are 30 times more likely to be killed or seriously injured on the roads when it has been raining than in snow, with 197 deaths and 2,721 serious injuries in Great Britain last year alone.

What evidence is there that rain contributes to deaths and injuries on the roads?

Travelling too fast for the current conditions was identified as a factor in one in nine road deaths in Great Britain last year, with drivers failing to alter how they drive in response to changing conditions on the road. It therefore made sense for us to launch a campaign urging drivers to slow down in the rain.

How do deaths and injuries in rain compare to snow and fog?

In total, there were 14 deaths and 153 serious injuries during fog, two deaths and 95 serious injuries during snow in Great Britain last year. Snow and fog are clearly a big risk to drivers but so is rain and wet road conditions, with many more deaths and serious injuries. That's why we want people to alter how they drive in all three weather conditions.

What are the dangers of driving in the rain?

Rain makes it harder for tyres to grip the road and harder for drivers to see ahead – significantly increasing the chances of being involved in a collision. Even driving within the speed limit in wet weather could be dangerous if you don't allow extra space between your vehicle and the vehicle in front.

How should people drive in the rain?

It generally takes at least twice as long to stop on a wet road as on a dry road because tyres have less grip on the surface. In wet weather you should:

- Keep well back from the vehicle in front as this will increase your ability to see and plan ahead;
- Ease off the accelerator and slow down gradually if the steering becomes unresponsive as it probably means that water is preventing the tyres from gripping the road; and
- Slow down if the rain and spray from vehicles is making it difficult to see and be seen.

What else can people do to improve their safety?

It's not just about changing how you drive when it's raining. You should check your vehicle is up to the job as well. That means making sure windscreen wipers, window demisters and all lights are working correctly. You should also check the condition and tread depth on your tyres and their pressure to make sure they're roadworthy.

What does the new safety campaign involve?

We're using radio, billboards, video on demand and social media to help get the message across to drivers. Rain-activated paint will also become visible to people leaving motorway services when it is raining, urging them to slow down.

What can you tell us about your new road safety video?

The video shows rain falling inside the home of a family imagined to have been involved in a serious road collision. It has been directed by award-winning photographer Nadav Kander, who has previously photographed Barack Obama and Prince Charles. The video is being shown on 'video on demand' websites and apps such as the ITV Hub and All 4, and is also available to watch on Highways England's YouTube channel.

What else is Highways England doing to tackle deaths and injuries on the roads?

We're aiming to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on England's motorways and major A-roads by 40 per cent by 2020 through road improvements, safety campaigns and other initiatives. Many of our major projects will improve safety on some of England's busiest stretches of motorway and major A-roads.

We've also launched other safety schemes such as our HGV cab which has been loaned to police forces across the country to patrol the network. To date, action has been taken against 2,700 dangerous drivers. ➔